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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 STOCKHOLM 001239

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TAGS: PREL PGOV SW AF CY BM IR IZ YI SU CD

SUBJECT: SWEDEN'S POLITICAL DIRECTOR ON IRAQ, IRAN,
AFGHANISTAN, CYPRUS, KOSOVO, BURMA, SUDAN, AND CHAD

REF: A. HELSINKI 753

B. NICOSIA 754

Classified By: DCM Robert Silverman, reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary and Comment

¶1. (c) During an October 4 tour d'horizon, MFA Political Director Bjorn Lyrvall reviewed Sweden's meetings on the margins of the UNGA and its activities and views on key issues:

-- Afghanistan. Sweden is considering a proposal from the Finns for the Finns to take over command of the Mazar e Sharif PRT. No decision has been taken on this switch, nor on whether it would entail a decrease of Swedish troops. DCM said he hoped it would not involve a decrease of Swedish troops.

-- Iraq. Sweden has been approached by France and the UK about joining a three-way effort to get the EU more involved in Iraq; increasing the EU role in Iraq is on the October 15 GAERC.

-- Iran. Sweden wants to wait for a decision in the UNSC on a third resolution before supporting EU sanctions.

-- Kosovo. The Troika-led process should be credible and allowed to play itself out. This will promote necessary EU unity in taking a position later.

-- Cyprus. Sweden is pushing for a renewed UN effort following the February presidential elections.

Comment: Sweden had declared its intention to double its troops in international deployments, from the current 850 to as many as 2,000. At the same time, potential defense budget cuts may put strain on some deployments -- possibly including the PRT in Afghanistan. Sweden has not yet made that decision, according to Lyrvall. End Summary and Comment.

Afghanistan

¶2. (c) DCM noted that we had heard that Sweden was considering a reduction of its troops in Iraq (ref A). Lyrvall said no decision had been taken yet. Sweden was working in close cooperation with its Nordic partners, and particularly Norway and Finland. Lyrvall said the Finns had told Sweden they were considering greatly increasing their contribution to the Mazar e Sharif PRT and asked about the possibility of Sweden handing off the command of the PRT to Finland. Lyrvall said this could possibly be done with no reduction of troops by Sweden, but emphasized again that no decision had been taken. DCM urged Sweden not to decrease its troop strength.

Iraq

¶3. (c) DCM inquired on follow-up to the successful visit of FM Bildt and Lyrvall to Iraq. Lyrvall said Sweden had been approached to join what could become a French, British, Swedish initiative on strengthening EU involvement in Iraq. This followed on the Bildt and Kouchner visits to Iraq. In response to the DCM's query, Lyrvall said Sweden would like to see the appointment of an EU Special Representative on Iraq, but the time was not right. Iraq was on the agenda at the GAERC.

Iran

¶4. (c) Lyrvall said the EU had discussed in New York the prospect of EU sanctions against Iran, and were expecting a report from French FM Kouchner in this regard. Lyrvall said Sweden had "no big appetite" for sanctions against Iran, particularly in view of the prospect of a third UNSC resolution on Iran that could clarify next steps. In Sweden's view, the UNSCR should precede sanctions. To be effective, sanctions needed stronger international support. Otherwise, the Iranians would simply shift their purchases to other sources. Lyrvall noted that Swedish trade with Iran was down to one-third the level of 2005. He said this slack had been taken up by exports to Iran from others. Iran had continued to be able to supply itself, but from other sources. (Comment: It was clear that Sweden's reservation on sanctions against Iraq owed much to its threatened commercial interests there. In 2006, Sweden's exports to Iran totaled about 540 million USD, with the major items being power generating machinery, telecoms, chemical products, including pharmaceuticals. and trucks and busses. End Comment.)

Kosovo

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¶5. (c) Sweden was waiting to see what the Troika could achieve, Lyrvall said. We should not prejudge the outcome. Lyrvall said that following the November elections, the prospects would be more clear. He emphasized, however, that the December 10 deadline was for the CG report to be presented. "We will still see what we do on the 11th," he said. It was important that the process leading up to the report and following it be credible; this was necessary not only for the Serbs and the Russians, but to make the EU come together. If there was a credible perception that "we tried, but failed," Sweden hoped the EU would unite.

Cyprus

¶6. (c) Lyrvall said Foreign Minister Bildt had, on the margins of the UNGA, discussed with other interested countries (U.S., Denmark, Finland, Italy, UK, The Netherlands, Poland, Greece) and UN USYG for Political Affairs Lynn Pascoe Swedish proposals intended to revive a "Gambari process" in Cyprus after the February presidential elections. These proposals would include sending a UN assessment mission, invitations from the UNSYG, and the appointment of a new Special Representative of the Secretary General. If the elections resulted in a new president, something even bolder could be considered.

Burma

¶7. (c) Lyrvall reviewed the activities of the international community in regard to Burma and noted that the issue of EU sanctions is on the agenda of the October 15 GAERC. He said Sweden was awaiting further information on the practical impact of sanctions, including those on timber, metals, and luxury items. He said it was important to work out what could be done in concrete terms, and that the EU should work jointly with the US on actions on Burma.

Sudan/Chad

¶8. (c) Sweden as part of the UN mission was awaiting the green light from the African Union to deploy the joint Swedish/Norwegian engineering battalion. The design of the Chad mission was still being discussed; Sweden anticipated contributing 200 troops.

EU Presidency

¶9. (c) DCM said we hoped to work closely with the Swedes in the run-up to their EU presidency in the second half of 2009, particularly in connection with Sweden's focus on global climate change. Lyrvall expressed Sweden's deep appreciation for Ambassador Wood's and the Embassy's working on fostering bilateral cooperation on alternative energy. He said the GoS would work with us on how to take forward this dialogue as Sweden prepared for its presidency.

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